

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 OMB-01 CIEP-01 TRSE-00 SCCT-01 /083 W

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R 161617Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000

DIA

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 15001

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MILI LE SY IS

SUBJ: LEBANESE-ISRAELI SITUATION

REF: A. BEIRUT 14943; B. USDAO BEIRUT 0815

1. PRIMIN SOLH'S ONE-DAY VISIT DEC 14 TO DAMASCUS (FBIS BE 141322), ALTHOUGH SCHEDULED IN ADVANCE OF DEC 12 ISRAELI AIRSTRIKE ON BEIRUT, TOOK ON ADDED SIGNIFICANCE IN AFTERMATH OF THAT RAID. ALTHOUGH DETAILS OF SOLH'S TALKS WITH SYRIAN LEADERS REMAIN SCARCE, HE REVEALED UPON HIS RETURN THAT SARG PRES ASSAD HAD PROMISED SYRIA'S "FULL SUPPORT" TO LEBANON. THESE REMARKS HAVE BEEN WIDELY INTERPRETED HERE AS IMPLYING SYRIAN MILITARY AID TO ENABLE LEBANON BETTER CONFRONT ISRAELI ATTACKS. IN MEANTIME, NEED FOR GOL TO BOLSTER ITS ANTI-AIRCRAFT DEFENSES HAS BECOME
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FAVORITE THEME IN LOCAL PRESS, WITH PRO-FEDAYEEN DAILY,

AL MUHARRIR, ALLEGING DEC 15 THAT PRELIMINARY CONTACTS ALREADY UNDER WAY WITH SOVIETS FOR SUPPLY OF SAMs. LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY, AN NAHAR, REPORTED DEC 16 THAT GOL HAD NOT YET REACHED DECISION TO REQUEST SAMs, BUT THAT MOSCOW WAS EXPECTED FURNISH THEM PROMPTLY IF GOL DECIDES TO MOVE. OTHER PAPERS ARE FULL OF SPECULATION RE POSSIBLE INTRODUCTION OF FOREIGN ARAB TROOPS AND WEAPONS INTO LEBANON, WITH LEFTIST DAILY, AL LIWA, REPORTING OVER WEEKEND THAT GOL WOULD INVITE FORCES FROM MOROCCO, SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT AND TUNISIA IF SITUATION VIS-A-VIS ISRAEL CONTINUES DETORiate.

2. DEC 14-15 SAW CONTINUED ISRAELI OVERFLIGHTS (REFTEL B), WHICH DREW MUCH PUBLIC ATTENTION (FBIS BE 131203 AND BE 151223). PRIMARY PURPOSE OF AIR ACTIVITY APPEARED BE RECONAISSANCE, BUT FEDAYEEN CONTINUED POUND THEIR CHESTS, CLAIMING THEIR MISSILES HAD FOILED SECOND IAF ATTACK NEAR TYRE REFUGEE CAMP. SIRENS WAILED IN BEIRUT AT PRECISELY 1300 LOCAL DEC 15, ALTHOUGH NO AIR ACTIVITY COULD BE OBSERVED.

3. FEDAYEEN ALSO KEPT POT BOILING ALONG LEBANESE/ ISRAELI BORDER. REPORTING DEC 14 CLASH IN UPPER GALILEE (FBIS TA 14220), PLO (Wafa) NEWS AGENCY PREDICTABLY CLAIMED FEDAYEEN HAD COME FROM WITHIN ISRAELI-HELD TERRITORY. TERMING OPERATION A SUCCESS, Wafa CIRCULATED USUAL PHOTOS OF FOUR DEAD FEDAYEEN (ALL APPARENTLY FROM FataH). NO EXPLANATION GIVEN AS TO HOW PICTURES OF FEDAYEEN ALLEGEDLY STATIONED IN ISRAEL CAME SO READILY TO HAND. HARASSING ACTIVITY ORIGINATING FROM LEBANON AND DIRECTED AGAINST IDF UNITS ON BORDER EVIDENTLY CONTINUED DEC 16 (FBIS TA 160625).

4. OTHERWISE, WEEKEND PASSED HERE MOR OR LESS NORMALLY. SOLE BOMBING REPORTED OCCURRED EVENING DEC 13 WHEN OFFICES OF WEEKLY, AD DIYAR, WERE BLOWN UP. MAGAZINE, WHICH ENJOYS IRAQI FINANCIAL SUPPORT, OCCUPIED SECOND FLOOR OF BUILDING WHICH ALSO HOUSES CONFIDENTIAL

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JORDANIAN EMBASSY (LATTER SUFFERED SLIGHT DAMAGE). AS REPORTED (BEIRUT 14707), DIYAR LAST WEEK CARRIED INTERVIEW WITH BREAK-AWAY FataH LEADER, ABU NIDAL. THIS WEEK (SHORTLY BEFORE EXPLOSION), DIYAR COMPOUNDED ITS "INDISCRETIONS" BY PUBLISHING INTERVIEW WITH JORDANIAN PM RIFAI (AMMAN 7445).

5. COMMENT: WE EXPECT GOL, TO WHOM INTRODUCTION OF

OF FOREIGN FORCES ON LEBANESE SOIL ALWAYS HAS BEEN ANATHEMA, WILL GIVE MAXIMUM PUBLICITY TO "CREDIBILITY" OF NATION'S AIR DEFENSES AND TO SYRIAN VOCAL SUPPORT IN EFFORT HEAD OFF AGITATION IN FAVOR OF REQUESTING EXTERNAL ARAB MILITARY AID. AS LONG AS QUESTION OF ISRAELI AIRSTRIKES REMAINS LIVE ISSUE, HOWEVER, PRESSURE WILL GROW ON GOL TO SHOW PROGRESS IN IMPROVING COUNTRY'S DEFENSE SYSTEM, AND MOVES TO ACQUIRE DEFENSIVE MISSILE SYSTEM CANNOT BE EXCLUDED. MEANWHILE, RUMORS ARE MAKING ROUNDS THAT PRES FRANJIE, IN MEETING DEC 13 WITH 'ARAFAT, AGREED TO PERMIT ELEMENTS OF PALESTINE LIBERATION ARMY (PLA) HERETOFORE QUARTERED IN SYRIA TO ENTER LEBANON TO ASSIST IN DEFENSE OF CAMPS. WHILE WE DOUBT RUMORS TRUE, WE ARE INVESTIGATING THEM AND WILL REPORT AS INFO DEVELOPS. HOUGHTON

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